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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 SKOPJE 000365

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

FOR G/TIP (SALLY NEUMANN), DOJ (JOE JONES), DOJ/OPDAT (CARL  
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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: POLICE LAUNCH ANTI-TIP RAIDS IN WESTERN  
MACEDONIA

REF: A. SKOPJE 132  
[1](#)B. SKOPJE 317

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (U) Four recent government (GOM) anti-TIP raids in western  
Macedonia in April and May highlight the GOM's increased  
anti-TIP efforts at the operational level. Ministry of  
Interior (MOI) officials acknowledge the initial raid was  
flawed, but have since provided better victim protection and  
evidence collection. The four operations rescued 33 external  
and internal TIP victims --four of them minors-- and allowed  
police to bring six TIP-related charges against club owners  
and their accomplices. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In a May 4 meeting with Post's Department of Justice  
Senior Police Advisor and Post's TIP Officer, the MOI's new  
Head of the Sector to Combat TIP, Sande Kitanov, reviewed  
recent police raids that are part of GOM efforts to  
investigate TIP allegations in suspicious establishments in  
western Macedonia. So far, with the active support of the  
Minister of Interior, the police have carried out four  
operations as part of a comprehensive on-going effort to  
combat TIP. Despite initial operational shortcomings and  
lack of victim cooperation, the police have utilized lessons  
learned and are handling the cases more effectively. As a  
result, the police have:

- Established a system of centralized decision-making to  
identify TIP victims;
- Centralized raid coordination to avoid leaks;
- Included social workers and labor inspectors in the raids,  
and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the  
victim interviewing process;
- Taken advantage of recent changes in the law regarding plea  
bargaining to secure future convictions;
- Provided a reflection period to vulnerable victims who have  
then decided to testify; and
- Heightened efforts to finalize Standard Operational  
Procedures (SOP) for TIP cases by the end of May.

April 22 Operation - 14 victims  
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[1](#)3. (SBU) On the night of April 22, Macedonian police raided  
seven clubs in the Tetovo area and seven in the Gostivar  
area. The joint police, labor and public revenue inspector

operation discovered fourteen external and internal female TIP victims. Even though no TIP victims were discovered at one site, the Oriental Ace club near Tetovo, the public revenue inspector seized Euros 11,000 and closed down the establishment, which has a reputation for prostitution activities, for "business irregularities."

¶4. (SBU) The MOI has launched an internal investigation into the case of three off-duty police officers who were present "as guests" in the Oriental Ace club at the time of the raid, and has seized two pistols from those officers. All 14 TIP victims found at the other localities are at the MOI Transit Center, where IOM has conducted preliminary interviews, followed by interviews by female MOI officers. So far, not one of the 14 victims, who have legal work documents to stay in Macedonia, has agreed to testify against the clubs' owners.

#### April 24 Operation - 11 victims

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¶5. (SBU) Convinced that the April 22 operation against the Oriental Ace club had been leaked in advance by an insider, the MOI decided to exclude the Tetovo police from a follow-up operation at the same club on April 24. The club was found to be fully operational at the time of the raid, despite a Public Revenue Service (PRS) seal from the April 22 raid that should have closed the club down. In the 15 minutes required for the police to enter the establishment, the club owners hid eight Bulgarian and two Serb women and one Macedonian (Roma) woman in a 2 square meter enclosure in the ceiling above the bar. All the women were rescued, and after interviews by IOM and the MOI, the 10 foreigners were placed at the Transit Center and the Macedonian national at the Open Gate La Strada (OGLS) shelter.

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¶6. (SBU) Since none of the victims agreed to testify against the club owner, the Special Organized Crime Prosecutor, in consultation with the MOI and the investigative judge, decided that there was no solid evidence to build a TIP or a sexual exploitation case against the owner of Oriental Ace. However, the owner, Ali Arifi, has been charged with two criminal offenses - illegal deprivation of liberty (i.e. the placement of the women in the ceiling enclosure) and violation of an employee's rights (i.e. none of the women had health insurance or social security). If convicted on these charges, Arifi could be sentenced up to three years on the first charge, and up to a year on the second.

#### April 26 Operation - 4 victims

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¶7. (SBU) Frustrated with the lack of incriminating testimony in the two Oriental Ace raids, the MOI decided to concentrate its efforts on the post-raid interviewing of four TIP victims found at the "Redgo" club near Tetovo on April 26. All four TIP victims are ethnic Albanian Macedonian nationals, two of them minors. The victims were placed at the OGLS shelter, where they were assigned a support team consisting of a social worker and a psychologist (and a guardian for the minors).

¶8. (SBU) For two days, the police allowed the victims to recuperate, and then interviewed them in the presence of their support teams. On the basis of the minors' testimony, the Special Organized Crime Prosecutor has charged the owner of the bar, a driver and the subject guarding the victims with crimes under Art. 418a (2) for TIP under aggravated circumstances. The prosecutor and police agreed to a plea bargain arrangement with a guard at the club, who is now cooperating in the case involving the two adult TIP victims. (Note: in Macedonia, cases involving minors are treated separately from cases that involve adults.) If convicted,

the two main suspects could be sentenced to a minimum of eight years in prison.

May 2 Operation - 4 victims  
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¶9. (SBU) In a May 2 operation, police rescued four TIP victims in a centrally located pizzeria in Tetovo. All four are Macedonian nationals; two of them are minors. One of the minors, the only ethnic Macedonian in the group, is a 15-year-old girl from Kumanovo who was sold by her mother at the age of 12 and has been abused sexually ever since. Three of the victims are currently at the OGLS shelter, and one of the two minors is with her family. The Kumanovo minor has cooperated with the Special Prosecutor and police. The collected evidence has allowed them to build an Art. 418a (2) TIP case under aggravated circumstances against the ringleader, Jusuf Dauti, who is in 30-day detention, and a child neglect case against the girl's mother. If convicted, Dauti could be sentenced to a minimum of eight years in prison.

COMMENT

¶10. (SBU) Following extensive political statements and public awareness campaigns on combating TIP in February and March (refs A and B), the GOM is showing its teeth by carrying out successful anti-TIP raids and post-raid victim protection. At the institutional level, the MOI's leadership has shown willingness to move away from its past refusal to acknowledge the extent of the TIP problem in Macedonia. MOI officials now acknowledge the existence of internal TIP victims and have started treating trafficked minors as a special category of victims. The new Head of the anti-TIP Sector, a long-time beneficiary of USG training, has been receptive to Post's suggestions on how to improve police operations, but he still faces challenges in coordinating operations with the local police. Post continues to monitor the anti-TIP efforts of the GOM and believes that, once the TIP SOPs are drafted and implemented, Macedonia will be even better prepared to protect victims and secure evidence to effectively prosecute TIP cases.

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